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Maysey Further Explains Benefits of MMAFA

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MMA Payout.com recently sat down with Mixed Martial Arts Fighters Association head Rob Maysey to clear up a common misconception of MMAFA and elaborate further on the benefits of the organization.

One thing that often gets misinterpreted with MMAFA is the thought that it is a union, or that it will necessarily lead to a union. Such is not the case, according to Maysey:

No, organization is not the obvious precursor to a union, though organization is the precursor to virtually any successful venture. I am a member of the American Bar Association (ABA), and have been for years. The ABA is not, has never been, nor does it intend to be a union of any kind. That said, membership in the ABA provides benefits to members that individually, they could not obtain on their own. By approaching providers on behalf of the entire membership of the ABA, the ABA is able to obtain group discounts on a variety of benefit plans and from service providers and vendors. Individually, these discounts would be unobtainable. By leveraging its collective membership, the ABA is able to provide its members with a number of benefits including discounts on insurance plans, hotels and rental cars, and from various vendors and service providers. Membership in the ABA also provides members with a network and platform in which to hone their skills and to gain notoriety in any chosen field by writing articles for ABA publications, by chairing committees, and by networking with members. The ABA also leverages its collective membership by effectively lobbying congress, submitting draft proposals of laws for consideration, and participates in litigation by filing amicus

briefs. Again, without the backing of its membership, none of these things is possible. By bringing attorneys together in one association, the ABA has created a very powerful and influential vehicle that not only provides benefits to its members, but also plays an active role in shaping the law.

Another example directly related to the mixed martial arts industry is the Association of Boxing Commissions (ABC). The ABC isn't a union of any sort, nor do they intend to be. The ABC, however, plays a central role in shaping the sport by adopting uniform rules which are voted upon and approved by each of its constituent members. Additionally, by coming together under one association, the ABC was able to create a "badge of distinction" that they then auctioned off to private enterprise. This distinction came in the form of the "Official Certified Database for Mixed Martial Arts," and this "official" recognition was sold to Mixed Martial Arts, LLC. This is value created solely by virtue of the individual commissions coming together under one umbrella to recognize one official database. No individual commission would have been able to auction off such recognition, but together as a group, they created value to private enterprise that didn't exist before.

The World Alliance of Mixed Martial Arts (WAMMA) provides another example in the Mixed Martial Arts industry. While not truly an "association," WAMMA fashions itself an "alliance" between its promotional and advertising partners. WAMMA, by assembling this alliance, aims to profit by creating brand value in yet another "badge of distinction," in this case, recognition as a WAMMA champion. By assembling the alliance and promoting its brand, WAMMA aims to profit by selling advertising to sponsors and by gaining corporate sponsorship for its rankings and belts. If WAMMA is unsuccessful in assembling a wide enough "alliance," no value will be created.

In terms of the MMAFA, organization is the precursor to group licensing, branding, and effective lobbying. Large revenue streams are being claimed by private enterprise in the form of corporate sponsorships, advertising, memberships, and branded products. Talent isn't even in the market for the vast majority of these revenue streams at all, because they don't have a group to present to the corporate sponsors and gear providers, and they don't have a group vehicle on the web to present to advertisers. Talent also has virtually no role in shaping the sport in which they compete, and in terms of influence, rank even below media. By coming together under one association, fighters will have a central voice in matters that impact the sport.

The model being utilized by the MMAFA has proven remarkably successful, over and over, and will provide its members with the same kinds of benefits, publicity, and protections as enjoyed by athletes in all of the other major professional sports. The MMAFA aims to maximize the influence and earning capacity of its members in the amazing sport of mixed martial arts. Unlike all other industry groups, the MMAFA is truly an association formed for the benefit of its members. The trademarks, logos, website, domains, and all other property of the MMAFA will be held in trust for the collective benefit of MMAFA members. Modeled closely after the Major League Baseball Players' Association and the Screen Actors Guild, the MMAFA will be led and directed by its members and their elected member representatives.

The MMAFA provides its members with a brand that can be monetized through the sale of merchandise, and through licensing to third parties. The MMAFA also provides the following to all of its members:

- Media platform and publicity vehicle to promote and publicize the activities of our members;

- Revenue maximization through merchandising and licensing of collective brand; and
- Lobbying, and if necessary, litigation vehicle.

The future direction of the MMAFA is determined solely by the members. I am not a member, nor am I an owner. Thus, it is necessarily presumptuous of me or anyone else to speak as to the direction the members will choose at some future date.

Some overstate the role of litigation in the overall structure of MMAFA, Maysey defined the role of litigation within MMAFA...

Litigation is not a goal of the MMAFA, but as you saw with the EliteXC complaint prepared by the MMAFA, an association provides an effective litigation vehicle for its members. The career of a professional mixed martial artist is relatively short in duration. Thus, professional mixed martial artists must maximize their earnings potential during their peak athletic years. Litigation is an expensive, time-consuming process, and for the vast majority of professional mixed martial artists, not a viable option. The MMAFA will provide its members with a litigation vehicle, should litigation be necessary or desirable to improve the condition and status of its members in the mixed martial arts industry.

Maysey also gave a detailed look at how MMAFA would add untapped revenue streams for fighters as well as provide other benefits:

I believe the MMAFA can provide all members with revenue streams they don't currently enjoy at all, and by capturing this revenue, the MMAFA seeks to provide all of its full members with health and other benefits. As the MMAFA matures, members decide how to allocate excess revenue, including the possibility of distributions to the members. Currently, in the mixed martial arts industry, private parties in the form of gear and apparel providers, community websites, media sites, and others profit from the personalities of the athletes who make this sport great. Very little of this ancillary revenue is returned to the talent at all. The MMAFA provides a vehicle to capture a large portion of this ancillary revenue for the talent—the one element consistently sought out by the general public.

Consider two potential tradeshow possibilities. This example is just a hypothetical used to show how various aspects of the industry currently operate, and to show why fighters on the whole receive a small fraction of the revenue they generate.

The first tradeshow is run and organized by a private enterprise, which pays a handful of fighters a small sum to appear at the tradeshow, and seeks to entice other fighters to attend by offering free admission. This private company then advertises the presence of the fighters to attract corporate sponsorships, advertising, and paying attendees from the general public.

The second tradeshow is presented by the MMAFA. All profits derived from this tradeshow go the members, less only the expenses of organizing the show. In the first example, fighters will collect approximately 5% at most of the profits derived. In the second example, the fighters become the owners of the event, and retain all profits.

The MMAFA has already prepared the stage, provided the infrastructure, and the tools necessary for fighters to do all of these kinds of things for themselves—and thus, keep the majority of the revenue derived.

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